

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-4. (Cancelled).

5. (Previously Presented) A group according to Claim 32, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.04$ .

6. (Previously Presented) A group according to Claim 32, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.02$ .

7. (Previously Presented) A group according to Claim 32, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the portion of said engagement piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.014$ .

8. (Currently Amended) A group according to Claim 32, wherein said means of regulation ~~comprise arrangement comprises~~ one or more stop elements for limiting ~~the~~ deformation of a portion of the wall of said cartridge in proximity of said outlet opening.

9. (Original) A group according to Claim 8, wherein said one or more stop elements comprise one or more fins which support said piercing member.

10. (Previously Presented) A group according to Claim 8, wherein said one or more stop elements comprise at least one annular member having diameter greater than said outlet opening.

11. (Original) A group according to Claim 10, wherein said annular member has a surface portion tilted towards the base wall of said cartridge.

12. (Original) A group according to Claim 11, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination between  $0^{\circ}$  and  $45^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

13. (Original) A group according to Claim 11, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination between  $15^{\circ}$  and  $35^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

14. (Original) A group according to Claim 11, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination of  $30^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

15. (Currently Amended) A group according to Claim ~~[[8]]~~32, wherein said ~~means of regulation of the deformation of the base wall are realized with a plastic material having visco-~~

elastic deformation regulation arrangement comprises a base wall of the cartridge including a visco-elastic plastic material.

Claims 16-19. (Cancelled).

20. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 33, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.04$ .

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 33, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.02$ .

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 33, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.0$  14.

23. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 33, wherein regulation of dispensing is carried out by means of one or more stop elements in order to limit ~~the~~ deformation of a portion of wall of said cartridge in proximity of said outlet opening during said phase of beverage dispensing.

24. (Original) A method according to Claim 23, wherein said one or more stop elements comprise one or more support fins of said piercing member.

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 23, wherein said one or more stop elements comprise at least one annular member having diameter greater than said outlet opening.

26. (Original) A method according to Claim 25, wherein said annular member has a surface portion tilted towards the base wall of said cartridge.

27. (Original) A method according to Claim 26, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination between  $0^{\circ}$  and  $45^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

28. (Original) A method according to Claim 26, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination between  $15^{\circ}$  and  $35^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

29. (Original) A method according to Claim 26, wherein said tilted surface portion has an inclination of  $30^{\circ}$  with respect to a horizontal plane supported on said annular member.

30. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim ~~[[16]]~~33, characterised by controlling ~~[[said]]~~ deformation by ~~means of the use of~~fusing plastic material with visco-elastic deformation in at least part of the base wall of said cartridge.

31. (Previously Presented) Disposable cartridge for the preparation of a beverage from a soluble product in a group for beverage preparation according to Claim 32.

32. (Currently Amended) A dispensing group for the preparation of a beverage from a soluble product of the type comprising a disposable cartridge containing the soluble product, said cartridge comprising at least one outlet for the delivery of a beverage comprised of said soluble product and a fluid, wherein said at least one outlet opening is defined by at least one breaking line present on a wall of said cartridge, said group further comprising a collecting device having a seat suitable to receive said disposable cartridge and wherein said collecting device comprises at least one piercing element having a substantially cylindrical engagement portion to pierce said cartridge in correspondence to said breaking line and to ~~engage~~fully enter the cartridge so that an exterior side surface the cylindrical engagement portion fully engages said outlet opening completely prior to dispensing a beverage, the dispensing ~~groups~~group further comprising a regulator arrangement for the delivery of said beverage, the regulator arrangement comprising at least one delivery port that is positioned during ~~[[a]]~~ beverage dispensing ~~[[step]]~~ between the ~~wall of said~~ piercing element and ~~[[the]]~~an edge of said outlet opening and extends substantially around the perimeter of the cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing element, wherein to obtain said at least one delivery port, the ratio R between the

diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 \leq R \leq 1.067$ .

33. (Currently Amended) A method for the preparation of a beverage from a soluble product contained in a disposable cartridge, comprising lodging said cartridge in the seat of a ~~collecting~~collecting device having at least one piercing member in order to open an outlet opening from said cartridge, said opening being defined by at least one breaking line present on a wall of said cartridge and said wall being initially completely engaged by a substantially cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing member after said piercing member has fully entered the cartridge and formed said opening but before dispensing said beverage, with said substantially cylindrical engagement portion at least partially positioned within the cartridge, providing entry of a fluid into said cartridge through an entry port of the cartridge in order to obtain dispensing of a beverage comprising said soluble product and said fluid, providing regulation for dispensing said beverage by means of at least one delivery port extending around the perimeter of the cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing element and being disposed between the ~~wall of~~ said piercing member and ~~the~~an edge of said outlet opening during ~~the~~ dispensing ~~phase~~ of said beverage, the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening being  $1 \leq R \leq 1.067$ .

34. (Previously Presented) A disposable cartridge for the preparation of a beverage from a soluble product in a group for beverage preparation according to the method of claim 33.

35. (New) A group according to claim 32, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 < R \leq 1.067$ .

36. (New) A method according to claim 33, wherein the ratio R between the diameter D2 of the engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter D1 of said outlet opening is  $1 < R \leq 1.067$ .

37. (New) A method according to claim 33, wherein the at least one delivery port has a substantially annular shape during dispensing.

38. (New) A group according to claim 32, wherein the at least one delivery port has a substantially annular shape during dispensing.

39. (New) A method for the preparation of a beverage from a soluble product contained in a disposable cartridge, comprising:

lodging said cartridge in the seat of a collecting device having at least one piercing member in order to form an outlet opening from said cartridge, said opening being defined by at least one breaking line present on a wall of said cartridge and said wall being initially completely engaged by a substantially cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing member after said piercing member has entered the cartridge and formed said opening, but before dispensing of said beverage;

with said cylindrical engagement portion being at least partly positioned within the cartridge, providing entry of a hot fluid under pressure into said cartridge through an entry port of the cartridge thereby deforming the outlet opening and creating at least one delivery port in order to dispense a beverage comprising said soluble product and said fluid, said at least one delivery port extending substantially around the perimeter of the cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing element and being disposed between the piercing member and an edge of said outlet opening during dispensing of said beverage, the ratio  $R$  between the diameter  $D2$  of the cylindrical engagement portion of said piercing member and the diameter  $D1$  of said outlet opening being  $1 \leq R \leq 1.067$ , and

regulating deformation of the at least one delivery port during dispensing of said beverage.

40. (New) A method according to claim 39, wherein the regulating includes forming the wall of the cartridge from a visco-elastic material designed to oppose deformation induced by introduction of hot fluid under pressure into the cartridge.

41. (New) A method according to claim 40, wherein the regulating further comprises providing a structure to oppose said induced deformation.

42. (New) A method according to claim 39, wherein said wall of said cartridge surrounding the breaking line comprises a plastically deformable material.



43. (New) A method according to claim 39, wherein said wall of said cartridge surrounding said breaking line comprises a visco-elastic material.

44. (New) A method according to claim 39, wherein the at least one delivery port has a substantially annular shape.

45. (New) A method of preparing a beverage from a soluble product contained in a disposable cartridge, the method comprising:

providing the cartridge with a bottom wall having a breaking line that defines an outlet opening;

piercing the bottom wall with a piercing member having a diameter equal to or greater than a diameter of the outlet opening such that at least a portion of the piercing member remains inside the cartridge with an edge of the outlet opening engaging an exterior side surface of the piercing member prior to carrying out a dispensing operation;

introducing hot fluid under pressure into the cartridge, with said portion positioned within and inside the cartridge, to deform and expand the outlet opening to allow dispensing of the soluble product when combined with said pressurized hot fluid; and

regulating deformation and/or expansion of the outlet opening during said dispensing operation so that said solubilized product is throttled when passing through the expanded outlet opening to generate an enduring layer of small-bubble cream.

46. (New) A method according to claim 45, wherein said bottom wall of said cartridge surrounding the breaking line comprises a plastically deformable material.

47. (New) A method according to claim 45, wherein said bottom wall of said cartridge surrounding said breaking line comprises a visco-elastic material.

48. (New) A method according to claim 45, wherein the outlet has a substantially annular shape during said dispensing operation.